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TS# 185752

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

26 July 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Probable Communist Reactions to Certain US or US-
Sponsored Courses of Action in Vietnam and Laos

PROPOSED COURSES OF ACTION*

CATEGORY I. Air raids upon key supply centers along the Viet
Cong supply and infiltration corridor in the Laos panhandle,
these raids to^{be} conducted by the VNAF, possibly using napalm

WPB for
MCN con

CATEGORY II. Ground force cross-border raids on the same targets
by GVN units up to battalion in size and perhaps accompanied by
US advisors.

CATEGORY III. Limited air strikes against specific military
and transportation targets in North Vietnam by unmarked planes
flown exclusively by non-US aircrews.

* These descriptions of proposed courses of action are abbrevi-
ated summaries of the courses spelled out in the JCS
Memorandum devoted to this subject

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not for

1. In response to the first or second categories of action, local Communist military forces in the areas of actual attack would react vigorously, but we believe that none of the Communist powers involved would respond with major military moves designed to change the nature of the conflict. Rather than risk escalation, which must appear to them unnecessary and potentially disastrous to long-term achievement of their objectives, they would be more likely to rely on a continuing war of attrition and on intensive propaganda and political maneuvering aimed at isolating the US and building up pressure for international conference to "neutralize" South Vietnam.

2. Reaction to air strikes on North Vietnam itself (Category III) would be sharper, but even in this case fear of escalation would probably restrain the Communists from a major military response. Though we think it unlikely, they might attempt isolated air raids on Saigon and other South Vietnamese cities hoping quickly to shatter South Vietnamese morale.

*See Remarks
Highly likely
to want
air def.*

3. There are various local military or semi-military actions, short of major change in the character of the conflict, which should be considered among possible Communist responses:

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(a) improvement of local air defenses (probably with additional AA equipment from North Vietnam and China), dispersal of supplies and troop concentrations, and movement discipline designed to hamper effective air attack. Such measures would be likely.

(b) intensification of Viet Cong ambushes and attacks, accompanied perhaps by the more or less covert introduction into South Vietnam of some additional personnel from North Vietnam. This response also would be likely.

(c) sabotage attacks on airfields in South Vietnam to damage their communications facilities, POL depots etc., and if possible to cripple planes on the ground. We believe such attacks likely.

(d) a widespread campaign of terrorism against Americans, including civilians and dependents, in South Vietnam. We think the chances of such a campaign would be less than even.

(e) Communist forces now in Laos could attempt to seize one or more of the Mekong towns; we believe such an attempt would be unlikely.

(f) fighter aircraft would be introduced into North Vietnam; we think this would be unlikely unless there were air attacks on North Vietnam. *In this case the odds would*

4. *9* ~~The USSR represents a special case among the Communist powers.~~ *of the USSR* ~~Its influence~~ *K* on the Communist camp in the Indochina situation is limited, and it ~~almost certainly~~ wants to avoid too direct involvement. Moscow would certainly want to show itself no less strong than the Chinese in opposition to the US-sponsored moves. It would almost certainly consider that

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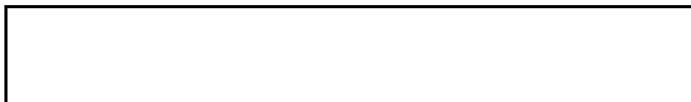
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an intense international campaign against the US could damage US interests considerably, to Soviet world-wide gain, and would not necessarily jeopardize Soviet detente tactics on issues of US-Soviet relations other than Vietnam. Accordingly, the Soviets would give Hanoi vigorous political and propaganda support, and would probably place themselves in the forefront of those calling for an international conference -- and might accompany this by leading a move in the UN to condemn the US.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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03 New 10.05 (before present 5)

The US policy of supplying the GVN with all material things necessary to let S. V. N. win its own war carries its own savage backlash. To ~~the~~ many of the GVN leadership this is a policy which permits VN to take the battle casualties, the murder of non-combatants, the destruction of property and the means to livelihood - scarce commodities - advice + which permits the US to provide / arms, ~~and~~ other material things, moral support - commodities in bounty, in which the affluent US possesses

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